

Daily Update on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) March 13, 2020

New information is in red

This update is also available at healthvermont.gov/covid19 under UPDATES

Current Status in Vermont

On Wednesday March 11, health officials [announced](#) a second person tested presumptive positive for COVID-19 in Vermont. The Chittenden County adult is being treated at the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington. The first person in Vermont [tested presumptive positive](#) in Bennington County March 7. Both tests are pending confirmation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Gov. Phil Scott will hold a press conference today (Friday March 13) at 5:30 p.m. to provide update on Vermont's response to COVID-19 and announce additional mitigation measures. The press conference will be livestreamed by Vermont PBS at vermontpbs.org/live/ and aired live on television on WCAX, Local 44 and WPTZ.

Vermont's Public Health Lab is ramping up its capacity to meet the growing need. We currently have the staffing capacity to conduct tests seven days a week and up to 78 tests per day. We are doing everything we can to meet the already high and growing demand for testing, including consolidating resources from various sources in Vermont and increasing our staffing capacity. We expect testing demands will continue to increase. At the national level, the CDC expects commercial labs will come onboard and be able to offer testing.

As the Health Department continues to work closely with hospitals around the state, we are focused on making sure everyone is getting the health care they need while also protecting Vermonters.

Anyone who is sick is encouraged to stay home and contact their health care provider. Call your provider, do not go to the office unless instructed to do so. **Do not go to or visit any hospitals or long-term care facilities unless absolutely necessary.** This is to protect everyone's health, including patients and staff. Anyone who does not have a health care provider can call 2-1-1 to be connected to a clinic in their area.

Updated guidance for returning travelers is on our website healthvermont.gov/covid19. See below for more information.

As of 1:00 p.m. on March 13, 2020:

Vermont cases of COVID-19	2
Vermont cases of COVID-19 requiring hospitalization	2
Vermonters tested negative for COVID-19	142

Vermonters being monitored	208
Vermonters who have completed monitoring	90

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic. In addition, the CDC [updated its travel guidelines](#) to include most of Europe in its Level 3 warning, recommending Americans avoid all non-essential travel.

The State Emergency Operations Center, which was activated Wednesday, continues to work closely with Department of Health to develop guidance on, and answer questions about, whether large gatherings and events should be canceled. At this time, officials are not recommending these events be canceled, but that guidance is subject to change as the situation evolves.

It is reasonable for older adults and persons with underlying health conditions to consider not attending a mass gathering event. Health Department and Agency of Education officials continue to work with colleges, universities and other educational institutions on guidance about potential closures of their facilities.

The Health Department is focused on ensuring its most vulnerable populations are protected, and is working to continuously update guidance and address emerging needs of long-term care facilities as new information becomes available.

Guidance documents are being added and updated daily as needed. These are available at healthvermont.gov/covid19.

Case Information

The second person who tested presumptive positive in Chittenden County is a male in his seventies. He was hospitalized this week. Public health epidemiologists are working to investigate possible travel or exposure history and to identify anyone who had close contact with the person. Those individuals will be assessed for their exposure risk and provided with guidance for their health. Where appropriate, they will receive recommendations for self-isolation or other restrictions.

The first patient is a Bennington County resident, currently hospitalized and in an airborne infection isolation room at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center.

We are in close contact with UVM Medical Center and Southwestern Vermont Medical Center to ensure patients and staff are properly cared for and protected.

We expect, and are prepared for, more cases in Vermont, and are taking every action to limit the spread of illness.

In addition to protecting a patient's personal health information, state health and public safety officials are committed to ensuring that Vermonters are aware of any risk to themselves and their community. This is the essential work of public health. We will contact anyone identified as at-risk as part of any case investigation, and recommend they stay home for 14 days or follow other restrictions as needed.

Actionable information for individuals, schools, organizations, businesses and others will be shared quickly to protect the health of Vermonters and prevent the spread of disease.

Anyone who feels ill or has concerns about their health should call their health care provider.

For the most up-to-date information and guidance about COVID-19, including from the CDC, visit healthvermont.gov/covid19.

Cost Sharing for Testing

- Governor Phil Scott announced on March 6 that the State will ensure that anyone who meets the medical requirements for testing for COVID-19 can do so at no cost. These actions will help ensure that the cost of testing for COVID-19 will not be a concern, if the test is determined to be medically necessary.
- To make sure tests that are determined to be medically necessary are free, the Department of Financial Regulation will issue an emergency bulletin requiring Vermont health insurers to waive any out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing including testing during emergency room, urgent care, and office visits.
- Similarly, no cost-sharing will be applied to COVID-19 testing for Medicaid members. And the cost of testing for anyone who is uninsured will also be absorbed by state government. Only about 3% of Vermonters do not have health care coverage.
- Earlier this week, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) also announced that those receiving health insurance through Medicare are eligible for medically necessary COVID-19 testing at no cost.

Containment and Prevention Measures

- We expect there will be more cases of COVID-19 in the state. Vermont Health Officials urge Vermonters to stay informed and take all necessary precautions.
- Following new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, returning travelers whose last day in China, Italy, South Korea or Iran was March 4 or afterwards should stay home and monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the United States. Travelers returning from Japan should monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the United States.

- All travelers who have returned from those countries in the last 14 days should call the Health Department at 802-863-7240. The Health Department will be in regular contact with you for 14 days since the day you left the affected area to monitor you for symptoms of shortness of breath, cough or fever. If you develop these symptoms, contact your health care provider right away.
- Vermont is currently working with New Hampshire in response to a New Hampshire case with close proximity to Vermont. Read more here: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/media/newsroom/vt-and-nh-health-officials-working-together-trace-contacts-nh-covid-19-case> and here: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HS-COVID19-March-4-update.pdf>.
- Since the virus first emerged, the Vermont Health Department has been in constant contact with CDC and other states to closely monitor developments, and work to minimize the spread of illness. State government has been advising health care providers, schools, emergency responders on the latest information and preventive measures, and providing guidance and updates on the website and through the news media. This is a quickly evolving situation with new information guiding actions on an ongoing basis. Staff across the Department of Health are working in the Health Operations Center to adjust our response as appropriate to the situation in Vermont.
- Epidemiologists and public health nurses have been following CDC protocols for monitoring people who have recently returned from travel to affected areas (which currently includes China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, and Japan). Monitoring means checking their temperature daily, watching for symptoms, and for some people, staying home.
- The Vermont Department of Health has compiled helpful guidance on how to help keep respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 from spreading, travel information and situation updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This can all be found at healthvermont.gov/COVID-19.
- The Health Department Laboratory has been testing for COVID-19 since early March and continues to increase capacity daily.
- At the direction of Governor Phil Scott, Vermont Emergency Management assembled an interagency task force to support the overall public health response and further prepare for the likelihood of COVID-19 cases in Vermont. This task force is focused on forward-looking, situation-specific mitigation planning, while the Vermont Department of Health continues its response to the current situation.
- The Health Department is working to strengthen protections for older Vermonters, including developing screening questions for visitors to long-term care facilities to identify anyone at risk. These have been made available for hospitals or other health care facilities.

- Health Commissioner Mark Levine is holding weekly calls with health care leadership around the state to provide updates and answer questions about the current situation.

Guidance for Vermonters

When to call?

- If you have questions about COVID-19: Dial 2-1-1
- If you are returning from [most of Europe](#), China, Iran or South Korea: Call Health Department Epidemiology at 802-863-7240
- **If you are sick or concerned about your health: Call your health care provider by phone. Please avoid going to the hospital, except in a life-threatening situation.**

Guidance for Specific Groups

- Schools and child care programs: The Health Department worked with the Agency of Education and the Department for Children and Families to issue public health guidance on March 10. The two documents below provide technical guidance for officials to guide their decision-making process.
 - [“School Closures and Dismissal During a Novel Coronavirus Outbreak”](#)
 - [Early Childhood Care and Education Programs Closure and Dismissal During a Novel Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

These can be found on healthvermont.gov/covid19 under “Resources for schools, child care programs and colleges.”

- Long-term care facilities: A [visitor screening tool](#) was provided to long-term care facilities, and [similar one](#) for hospitals to help protect patients and/or residents and staff these facilities. These documents have also been posted on healthvermont.gov/covid19, under “Long-Term Care Facilities” and “Health Care Professionals.”

Guidance for Travelers Returning to Vermont from an Affected Area

As of March 12, 2020, travelers returning from [most of Europe](#), China, Iran and South Korea should **stay home**, monitor their health and practice social distancing for 14 days.

Call Health Department epidemiology and infectious disease staff at **802-863-7240** for monitoring information.

If you have symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty breathing call your health care provider. Before you go to an appointment, let your health care provider know that you are being monitored for novel coronavirus.

Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

Household members who **did not** travel do not need to be monitored and do not need to stay home, unless that person develops symptoms.

Guidance for People in Close Contact with a Person who Tested Positive for COVID-19

People who have been identified by the Health Department as a close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 should stay home, practice social distancing and monitor their health for 14 days. Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible. The Health Department will be in contact with you regularly during the monitoring period. If you develop symptoms: Call your health care provider right away. Before you go to an appointment, let your health care provider know that you are being monitored for novel coronavirus. Call Health Department epidemiology and infectious disease staff at 802-863-7240. Avoid contact with others.

What does close contact mean?

“Close contact” means being within six feet of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for a long time.

This can happen when caring for, being intimate partners with, or living with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Or if you shared a health care waiting area.

If you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19: stay home, limit contact with others, and call Health Department Epidemiology at 802-863-7240. Staff will discuss whether you need to see a provider, and how you will monitor yourself for symptoms. When someone tests positive for COVID-19, the Health Department conducts outreach to close contacts of the individual.

Close contact *does not* mean being more than six feet away in the same indoor environment for a long period of time with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19; It also does not mean walking by, or briefly being in the same room with someone who tested positive. In these situations, you should observe yourself for symptoms. You do not need to call the Health Department.

Anyone who develops symptoms should stay home and call their health care provider.

People At Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19

Some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness, including older adults and people with chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease. According to the CDC, these people should take extra precautions including:

- Stocking up on supplies
- Avoiding crowds

- Avoiding cruise travel and non-essential air travel
- Staying away from others who are sick

Read the CDC's full guidance on [People At Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19](#).

Everyday Preventive Measures

Person-to-person spread of the virus is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Much is still unknown about how the virus spreads. Take these everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Additional Resources

The Vermont Department of Health website contains guidance and answers to frequently asked questions, including:

- What does “monitoring” mean?
- Information for people under monitoring
- What does close contact mean?
- How can I protect myself?
- Should I wear a face mask when I go out in public?
- Guidance for travelers returning to Vermont from an affected area
- Where is it safe to travel internationally?
- I am returning from an affected area. What should I do?
- Who can get tested for COVID-19?
- What should people planning large gatherings in Vermont do?
- What is the turnaround time for testing?
- Where can I find translated materials?
- Can the Health Department provide documentation that I can go to work?
- Guidance for specific groups:
 - Businesses
 - Communities
 - First Responders
 - Health care professionals
 - Long-term care facilities
 - Schools, child care programs and colleges

View these resources at healthvermont.gov/covid19

Vermonters can also dial 2-1-1 for information.

The CDC is regularly updating its guidance at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html).

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